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## AN EXPERIMENT IN CO-OPERATION IN ENGLISH

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In every high school the regular work in English is organized on a three-year or a four-year basis. As a rule the colleges and universities require for entrance three years of work in literature and composition. Small high schools frequently give only three years of this work. The J. Sterling Morton High School has four years of English in its curriculum. The pupils who are preparing for college and are pressed for time by reason of the requirements for college entrance are exempted from taking the fourth year of our English course. Because of this the fourth year of the work in English is planned to be an equivalent of the first year of the English work in college.

With us, besides the regular English work, there are three supplementary types of work which are followed outside of the course in English. This supplementary work is designed to bring the English throughout the school under close surveillance. In the first place, each teacher occasionally becomes a teacher of English in conducting an exercise which we call "subject spelling." The subject-matter of this exercise for each class, viz., algebra, American history, general science, English, etc., comes from two sources: first, words found misspelled by the teacher of each subject in examining the written papers submitted by his pupils; and, secondly, words which the teacher adds to the list which are technical or peculiar to the subject and which should be in the vocabulary of a pupil who studies that subject. Every teacher in the high school, including the sewing, physical training, cooking, and drawing teachers, at regular intervals conducts this exercise, each in his own class, which is called "special spelling." A portion, perhaps ten minutes, of the regular recitation is devoted to this work. Thus every teacher in the school is by this process endeavoring to

enlarge the vocabulary of his pupils. The procedure in this exercise is about as follows: Pupils are required to spell, define, syllabicate, and give the salient points of etymology, give the part of speech, and, most of all, use the word in a sentence that shows by its content that the pupil knows the meaning of the word. This exercise is conducted in a purely informal manner. At the end of each month the teachers report to the office the grades of the pupils for this work, and the mean of the pupil's marks in all these exercises is set down under the title of "Subject Spelling" in the monthly report to the parent.

In another way every teacher in the school becomes for fifteen minutes each day a teacher of English. Every pupil of the school is required to attend what we call special spelling classes. These are really classes for the study of words. In organizing these classes the pupils are divided into four groups corresponding to the four years of high school. These groups are subdivided into sections so that each teacher meets about fifteen pupils or less. There is a special list of words for each group, graded to each of the four years of high school. The highest group bases its study almost entirely upon an unabridged dictionary and Crabb's *English Synonyms*. With a special list of words for each group, all the sections in each of these groups are studying the same words the same day. Thus among the members of each of the four classes there is a community of interest in the words for the pupils to use among themselves. These words have been collected by the teachers in the different departments of the high school. They are words that the pupils have attempted to use in their oral or written work and have used incorrectly. Every day in these classes, the lesson assignment consists of two words. In preparation the pupils are required to consult an unabridged dictionary. Besides this, such books as *Weekly, The Romance of Words*; Greenough and Kittridge, *Words and Their Ways in English Speech*; Fernald, *English Synonyms, Antonyms, and Prepositions*; Roget, *Thesaurus of English Words and Phrases* are accessible for consultation by the pupil. Here again as in the subject spelling work, the pupils are required to spell, syllabify, define, give the etymology and the part of speech, and use the words in sentences. The recitations are almost

entirely oral and consist of an informal discussion of the shades of meaning of the words. Then the pupils are asked to invent sentences that show by their content that they know the meaning of the word. These sentences are discussed by the members of the class. Thus it is by this exercise that every teacher in the school is a teacher of English for fifteen minutes each day.

The third plan whereby we essay to make every teacher a teacher of English is perhaps rather more difficult to administer, but if the teachers are willing to co-operate, as they are in this school, satisfactory results can be obtained. Each teacher in departments other than English reports at the end of each month a grade in English for each pupil in his classes. Teachers in certain departments, of course, must be exempt from this plan either because they have no oral recitation, as for example the teachers in physical training, or because they do not hear recitations in English, as for instance the teachers in modern languages; but the teachers in nearly all of the other departments report each month, along with the grades for their own subjects, a separate grade in English. This brings to the notice of the teacher as well as of the pupil that the English in every class must be given special attention. In order that the English grades may have some definite basis, a series of directions are drawn up for the guidance of the teachers of departments other than English. There is one general set of directions as follows:

#### FIRST YEAR, FIRST SEMESTER

The following general requirements shall be enforced in all departments:  
*Oral:*

1. Not more than 25 per cent of the recitation shall be in incomplete sentences. These recitations may be given while the pupil is seated.
2. The careful enunciation of syllables, particularly of final syllables, shall be insisted upon.
3. If the recitation gives promise of continuing for several sentences, the pupil shall rise and stand erect and free.
4. Sentences shall not be introduced with such words as "why," "well," "ah," etc.
5. The use of slang shall not be permitted.

*Written:*

1. Balanced margins shall be maintained both at top, bottom, and sides of the page on which the written composition is placed.

2. Paragraphs shall be indented.
3. Sentences shall begin with capitals.
4. Sentences shall close with periods.
5. The use of incomplete sentences shall not be allowed.
6. Written work shall be legible.
7. A liberal space shall intervene between consecutive lines and consecutive words.
8. The use of commas in series shall be insisted upon.
9. The use of long, straggling compound sentences shall not be permitted.
10. The use of slang shall not be permitted.

## FIRST YEAR, SECOND SEMESTER

*Oral:*

6. The discriminating use of words peculiar to this particular department shall be inculcated.
7. Opening sentences of paragraphs shall contain a topic statement.

*Written:*

11. Opening sentences of paragraphs shall contain a topic statement.
12. Single paragraphs, especially those of considerable length, and the closing paragraph of related paragraphs shall be concluded with a summarizing statement.

## SECOND YEAR, FIRST SEMESTER

*Oral:*

8. If the recitation is of the nature of a report, or lengthens to a paragraph, the pupil shall stand in front of the room before the class.
9. Errors in grammar shall not be permitted.
10. Recitations shall be audible to all.
11. In talking on a topic, the pupils shall look their classmates in the eyes and assume a free and easy position.

*Written:*

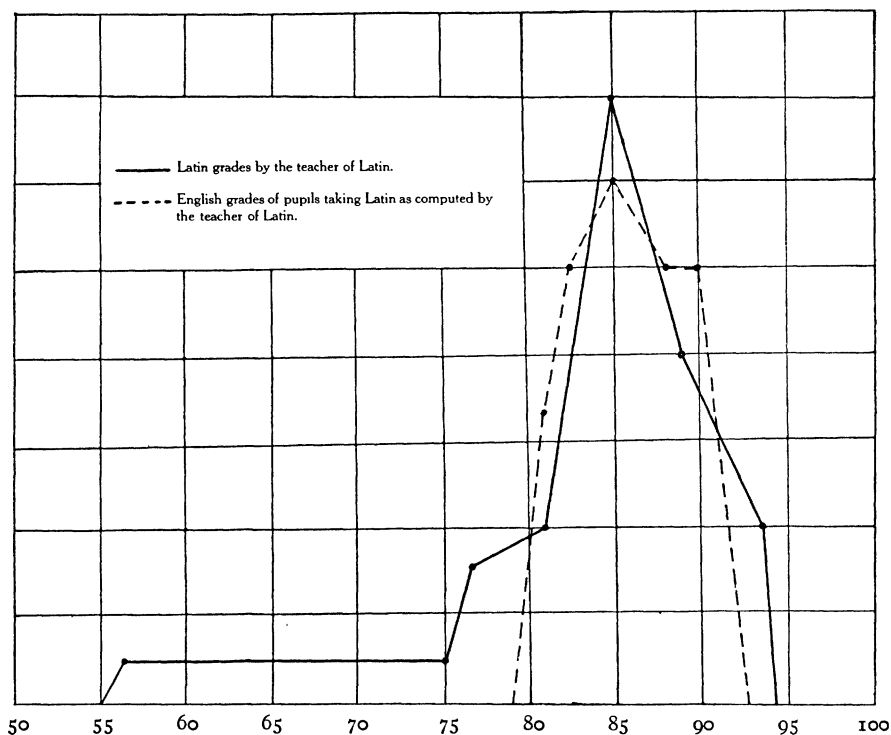
13. A dependent clause standing first in the sentence shall be followed by a comma.
14. In a compound sentence independent clauses not closely related shall be separated by commas.
15. Parenthetical material shall be set off by commas.

The grades that the teachers other than English teachers hand in each month are averaged at the end of the semester, and this average is reckoned as one-fourth of the English composition grade for the semester. These grades are called English exponent grades. Mr. Walter S. Spelman, an instructor in the English department, in a report on this experiment, wrote in part as follows:

The English faculty were compelled to keep in view two considerations: the fundamental requirements of correct English, and the burden of the

enforcement on their fellow-teachers. The former demanded a large number of rules, the latter, few and specific ones; and the former was sacrificed. Again, with the same object in view, the English faculty have made a detailed, comprehensive, and consistent outline of their own work which brings out in one month what is called for by the direction sheet of the next month; in fact, they have even made out a list of pupils and their respective English teachers, which enables any instructor to call the English teacher to account, rather than

CHART I

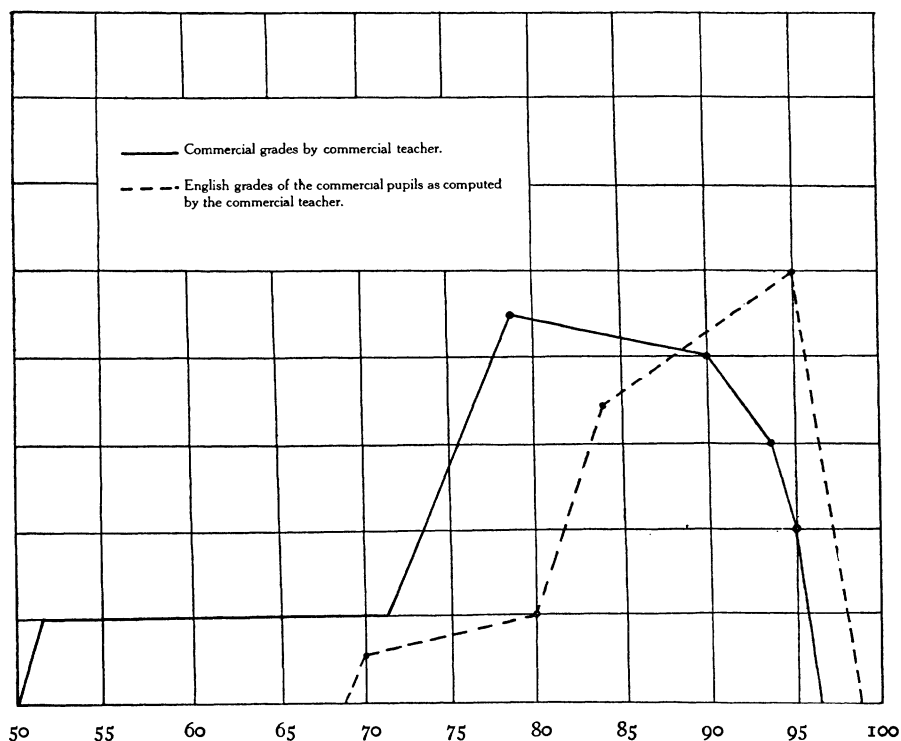


the student, for the latter's poor work in English. Moreover, each student is required to keep a record of all directions, usually in a notebook, and these are dictated or given out, not by the English teacher, but by the various instructors. In short, the English duty of a physiology teacher, for instance, is to oversee, inspect, and criticize the English expression, while he is carrying on his own work. It does not demand re-reading of written material, nor red ink, nor consultation. It does, however, demand that there be given monthly in each subject a separate English grade, the "exponent grade" as it is called with us, because it is notated as an exponent to the subject grade. To this extent

the experiment in faculty co-operation demands extra work on the part of the instructor in the other departments. Thus far, however, no complaints have been made; in fact, the instructors became keenly interested and made known their advice, needs, and willingness to co-operate in the system.

The plan, in addition to its primary enforcement by instructors, has a secondary significance in its relation to the grades of the students. The semester grade of the student in English composition is now calculated by

CHART II



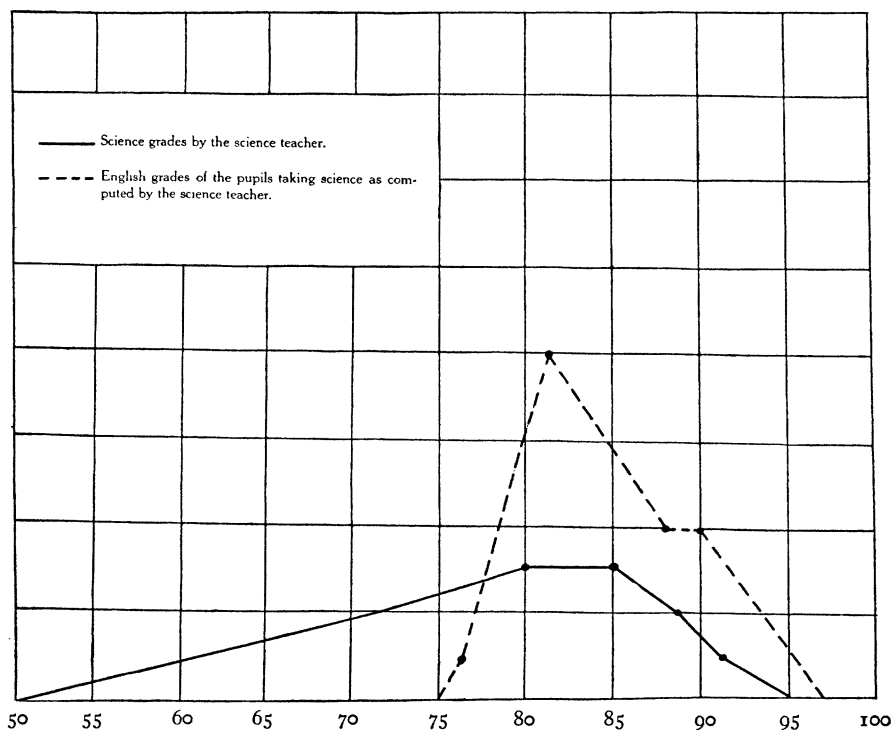
valuing the mean average of the several exponent grades in all subjects as 25 per cent, and the final grade of the English instructor in composition as 75 per cent, on a basis of 100. This means not only that the student is obliged to practice under varying conditions, and throughout the whole school day, the fundamentals of good English, but also that such practice bears a direct relation to his English grade. To sum up: it seems that the English teacher "has him."

In connection with the final grades it is of interest to both teachers and students to perceive the exact mathematical relation between the subject grades and the English exponent grades and the relation between the English

composition final grades estimated without the exponents and these final grades estimated with the exponents. The graphs given below cover the work of an entire semester, and are made with the abscissas expressing the grade percentage, and the ordinates the number of pupils. A brief study of them will prove clearly the following relations:

First (graphs Nos. 1, 2, and 3), that the instructors in subjects other than English give English grades, the exponent grades, that both average higher

CHART III

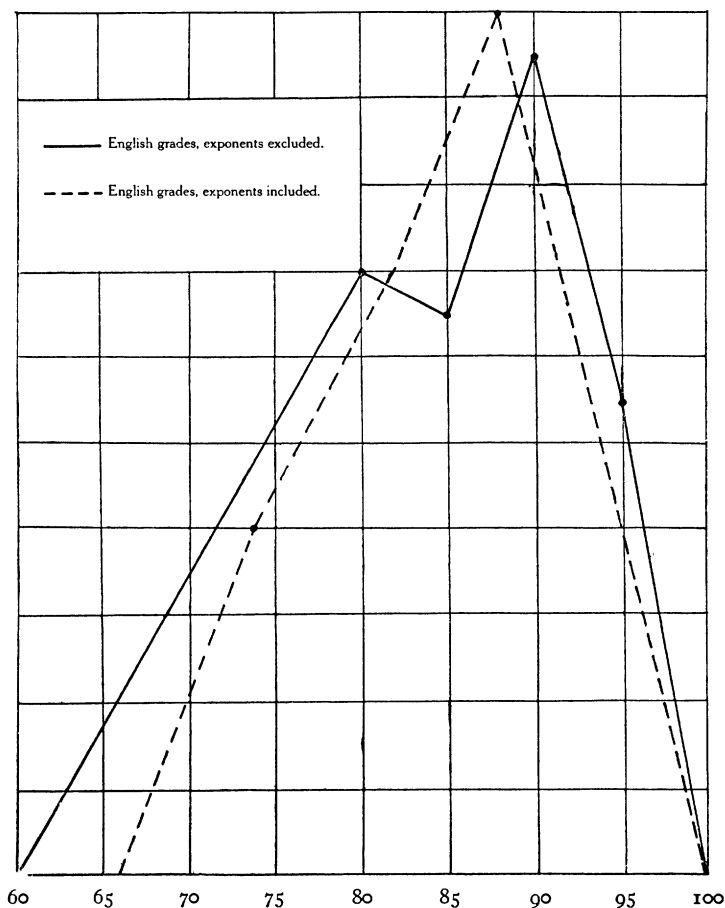


than their subject grades, and also have a more limited range. In graph No. 1 the exponent grade includes a greater area than the subject grade line. It extends from 79 to 92 while the subject grade line extends from 56 to 94. Such a situation indicates that they "are spending other people's money more freely than their own." But it is not abnormal. A Latin teacher is not an English teacher, nor does the plan require him to be one. With the conditions reversed a similar result would follow. The graphs show, however, the necessity for care on the part of the instructors in considering the pupils and their English.



Secondly, it is seen (graph No. 4) that the value of the final English composition grade of the pupil is, *on the whole*, increased by including the exponent grade. But this increase shows clearly the influence of that peculiarity, the narrow range of the exponent grades. Those pupils with poor or very poor

CHART IV



English grades are benefited somewhat; while those pupils with excellent grades, fewer in number, however, than the preceding, suffer a penalty. It is a warning to instructors, the English instructor as well as the others, for a more careful and more systematic estimation of grades. It means the co-operation of the entire faculty, and all the advantages such co-operation ought to bring to teacher and pupil.

In addition to the general set of directions shown above, each week a special direction is sent out and the teachers in the departments other than English report to the English teachers weekly upon these special directions. This report is on a 6×8 card upon which are the name of the class, the name of the teacher, and the names of the pupils. At columns to the right of the pupils' names are blank spaces and here is indicated whether, during the week, the teacher finds each pupil using incorrectly or correctly the direction or suggestion fastened at the top of the card. Some of these directions are here given:

1. Insist upon the elimination of "and," "and-ah," "why," "why-ah," "well," etc., as connectives.
2. Insist upon the concord of subject and predicate, especially in the case of the verbs "be," "do," "go," and "come."
3. Note that "each," "every," "someone," "anyone," and "every one" agree with singular verbs and pronouns.
4. Do not allow double nominatives; e.g., "*The boy, he* went home."
5. Guard against "kind of a," "sort of a," when meaning "somewhat."
6. Avoid the use of "those kind" and "these kind."
7. Insist that the subject of the sentence be expressed, avoiding the incomplete structure.
8. See that pronouns have their antecedents expressed.
9. Do not allow "hadn't ought."
10. Insist on the proper use of "awful."
11. Do not allow "not hardly."
12. Insist on the proper use of "care" and "way."
13. Insist on the correct use of "off" and "from." Discourage the use of "off of."
14. Do not allow "the reason is because."
15. Insist on the proper use of the relative "who" and "which" for "and he," "and it."
16. Do not allow "this here."
17. Do not allow "that is when" or "that is where."

The teachers in the other departments also report to the English department errors in English that occur in their classes and these are used in the English classes at the proper place in the composition course. Thus, in various ways there is a co-operation to bring the English department in the school to a higher level.